

Appendix E – KING 5 News Story, Jean Enerson

King County children eligible for free dental care | Children's Health Link | KING5.com | News for Seatt... Page 1 of 2



King County children eligible for free dental care

03:57 PM PDT on Saturday, March 15, 2008

By JEAN ENERSEN / KING 5 News



Video: Free dental care for low income kids

[Larger screen](#) [E-mail this clip](#)

SEATTLE - Half of the children in King County do not get the dental care they need.

Now a new program is helping to change that.

When her family lost dental coverage through her employer this year, Kathy Overhus was worried.

"We just paid cash for the dental appointments so we limited what we did," she said.

She was surprised to learn her family was eligible for a program that could provide the kids free dental care.

First they had to meet some guidelines.

Families must live in King County and have no dental coverage. It's for children younger than 20 whose families earn between 250 and 300 percent of the federal poverty level. That's around \$61,000 a year for a family of four.

It sounds high, but families with lower income may qualify for state aid.

"We don't make so little that we qualify for more help. But, the situation that we're in, we're not making enough and getting the benefits that we need," Overhus said.

Dentist Dwight Cottrill says that often puts families he sees in a dilemma.

"They seem to bring their kids in fairly regularly I think," he said. "I think probably more than themselves. It's probably kids first, mom and dad last."

Washington Dental Service, the biggest dental insurer in the state, is sponsoring the program with a \$1 million grant. Families can choose from more than 900 dentists.

http://www.king5.com/health/children/stories/NW_031508HEB_dental_care_free_KS.5a182481.html

7/10/2008

Appendix E – KC Kids Flyer



CHILDREN'S ORAL HEALTH PROGRAM

Dental Care for Kids in King County!

The **KC KIDS** program provides dental care coverage, at no cost, to children who qualify. You are likely to be eligible if:

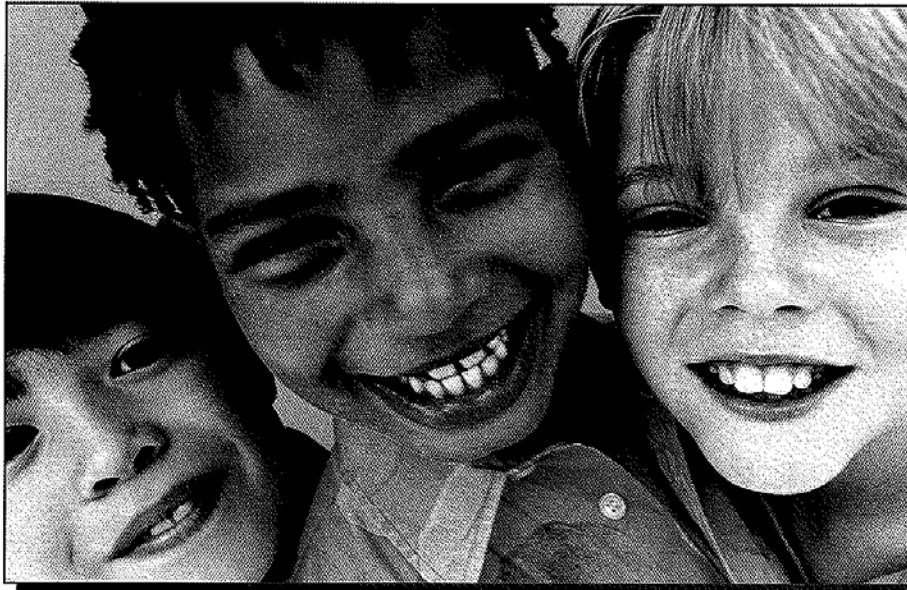
- ☐ You live in King County, Washington.
- ☐ Your children are under the age of 20.
- ☐ Your income meets certain guidelines.
- ☐ Your children have no other dental coverage.

Enroll Today!

Website: www.kckidsdental.org

Call us: (866) 839-9466

MON - FRI, 6 AM to 6 PM



Special Program for 2008!

Enroll Today! The **KC KIDS** program runs from **January 1 to December 31, 2008**. In January 2009, families will need to apply for benefits through the state of Washington.

Helping Community Kids

KC KIDS is a King County children's oral health pilot program, supported by a \$1 Million gift from Washington Dental Service.

* Income Guidelines

If your income is below these guidelines, contact Community Health Access Program to learn about other programs. Call (206) 296-4841 or visit www.whf.org/programs/chap.aspx.

January 2008

|  Family Size | Household Monthly Income* |
|--|---------------------------|
| 2 | \$2,852 - \$3,423 |
| 3 | \$3,577 - \$4,293 |
| 4 | \$4,308 - \$5,163 |
| 5 | \$5,027 - \$6,033 |
| 6 | \$5,752 - \$6,903 |
| 7 | \$6,477 - \$7,773 |
| 8 | \$7,202 - \$8,643 |
| 9 | \$7,928 - \$9,513 |
| 10 | \$8,653 - \$10,383 |

Appendix E – Crossroads Article



Brett Downey shares public health tips with Mini City Hall employee, Khwaja "Sham" Shamsuddin.

Help When You Need It

Crossroads Correspondent

Your child needs medical or dental care. You've heard there is assistance available, but don't know where to start. Where can you go for help? Crossroads. Brett Downey, King County Public Health outreach specialist, is in front of Crossroads Mini City Hall every Monday morning to help people get the assistance they deserve.

Downey knows the system well. His personal experience with public health assistance led him to a career in social services. In 1990, shortly before his son was born, he lost his job after 13 years in the travel industry. "I lost my health insurance, a disaster for a new par-

Help When You Need It *Continued from page 1*

ent," said Downey. He took his child to East District Public Health (now Eastgate Public Health) for immunizations. "That's where I experienced first hand the compassion of the people at the public health office." His experienced motivated him to pursue work in social services "so I could pay that forward."

Today, Downey helps people apply for assistance with health insurance, food, energy and childcare. He helps them find medical and dental care resources so they can develop an ongoing relationship with health care providers and obtain critical health screenings. "Our goal is to reduce health disparities by empowering residents of King County." 17 years later, that goal still motivates Downey. "I enjoy my work today as much as I did when I started." He loves the cultural

diversity of the Crossroads area and enjoys assisting the people who drop by to talk to him on Monday mornings.

The job isn't always easy. Downey said the most challenging aspect of his work is gaining people's trust, but his easy-going sincerity quickly breaks down most barriers. "My goal is to help every individual and every family receive the benefits they are entitled to."

Downey is at Crossroads every Monday, 10am-1pm. His table is full of information and fun little extras. Excellent information is also available at www.kingcounty.gov/health. Many resources are available in multiple languages. Brett Downey can be reached at 206 263 8373 or brett.downey@kingcounty.gov.

Appendix E – Puget Sound Business Journal Article

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PUGET SOUND BUSINESS JOURNAL MAY 16-22, 2008

Power of the web not just for the affluent

From researching treatment options for a newly diagnosed disease, to communicating about the health of friends and family, the internet is frequently the first resource people turn to for health information.

Some policymakers assume that internet use is limited to upper- and middle-income groups, but there is evidence that the majority of low-income families have web access at home, work or in the community. Therefore web connections could be an excellent way to increase access to health care for those who need it most.

Access to health care is a huge problem in our state, especially for children. Based on the state's most recent 2006 Washington State Population Survey, there are at least 45,000 uninsured children who live in families with incomes below 250 percent of the federal poverty level. Many families who fall into this category also struggle to meet more immediate needs, such as food, shelter, employment and education. They are forced to make hard choices.

Here is a common scenario. Jessie, a single mother living in a medium-size town, runs her own business as an in-home child care provider. She has difficulty making ends meet, especially as the prices of gas, food, and other essentials keep rising. Her ex-husband has not made child support payments for over a year.

Unable to keep up with increasing health insurance premiums, she discon-

tinues her health insurance policy.

Jessie's 5-year-old daughter has headaches that keep her home from school some days but Jessie can't afford to take her to the doctor.

Jessie worries that her daughter may have a serious problem, yet feels powerless to do anything. She suspects that her family could qualify for state-supported health insurance, but the nearest Community Service Office that could help her is 20 miles away. She cannot get there during the day, because she has no one to fill in for her at the child care, and because she can't afford the loss of income.

People like Jessie need an easy way to find out if they qualify for health insurance, and a streamlined process to apply, get approved and begin to access care. An example of a new technology helping families like Jessie's is ParentHelp123.org. This website is a program of WithinReach, a nonprofit with 20 years of statewide outreach and health promotion expertise that now provides online information about health and nutrition resources for

HEALTHY FAMILIES



Dr. Jill Sells

families and pregnant women throughout Washington state.

ParentHelp123.org is available in both English and Spanish, and provides an easy application process for state-sponsored health and food programs. This allows families to learn about and apply for the help they need from the comfort of their own home or office, at any time, day or night. The website attracts a wide range of users, including families, counselors, medical practitioners, social workers and teachers.

Since the service was launched in April 2007, there have been more than 32,000 site visitors, 8,000 families screened for program eligibility, and more than 4,000 program applications completed. Clearly there is demand for this technology.

Disparities in health and access to

The multiple challenges facing low-income working families like Jessie's compound each other, with the potential to further increase the difference between the haves and have nots related to food and health care access, and to child health and educational outcomes.

Web-based technologies are emerging as a very powerful way to reach and connect all families with the resources they need to grow healthy families. King County and Washington state are committed to helping all children have access to insurance and health care.

This will only be accomplished through public-private partnerships, such as those which helped build ParentHelp123.org. The Puget Sound region is bursting with technology expertise and creativity. Pairing this with our commitment to improving health for

ParentHelp123.org provides an easy application process for state-sponsored health and food programs.

health care between upper- and lower-income families are well documented. Children who are not feeling well due to sickness or hunger cannot perform to their full potential at school or in other activities. Parents who miss work to care for sick children may be threatened with job loss.

all children, Washington state can take the lead in creating a healthier and more productive future generation.

DR. JILL SELLS is director of *Docs For Docs* Washington State and a member of the board of directors of *WithinReach*. She can be reached at jells@sanfordbhamini.org or 206.914.1783.

Appendix E – City of SeaTac and Seattle Housing Authority Newsletters Article

Keep kids healthy through preventive care

Do you have children under the age of 19 and need free or low cost health insurance or help finding a doctor or dentist? The Children's Health Initiative can help!

Call 206-296-3944 or visit www.metrokc.gov/health/kchap/chi.htm

The Children's Health Initiative helps families enroll their children in health insurance, find doctors and dentists, and coordinate their care so that children receive the preventive care they need in order to stay healthy.

As part of the Children's Health Initiative, Washington Dental Service is supporting a no-cost dental program for children in King County who lack private dental insurance and do not qualify for public programs. To see if you qualify, call 866-839-9466 or visit www.kckidsdental.org.

In January 2007, King County Executive Ron Sims and the King County Council launched the exciting Children's Health Initiative to improve the health of low-income children. In 2007, the Children's Health Initiative enrolled 1,420 kids in health insurance and helped over 3,000 kids get to the doctor or dentist. The initiative is a public-private partnership funded by King County and 17 private funders.

Appeared in City of SeaTac Newsletter and in the *The Voice*, Newsletter of the Seattle Housing Authority

Appendix E – Email Announcement

Page 1 of 2

Johnson, Susan

From: Teresa Mosqueda [Teresa@childrensalliance.org]
Sent: Monday, June 02, 2008 9:57 AM
To: Teresa Mosqueda
Subject: Health Coalition - Children's Health Announcements
Attachments: KCBA CHILDREN AND FAMILIES 2008.ppt

Hello Health Coalition for Children and Youth members,

This email contains two announcements related to children's health:

First, HCCY member **Susan Johnson, of Public Health Seattle & King County**, was recently interviewed by Gary Davis of **KPLU** on the progress of the King County Children's Health Initiative in helping meet the Governor's goals and the markers as set forth in the **Commonwealth Fund report** on children's health. It's available in the news stories section of KPLU website. I pitched linkage to usual source of care as key for improving access beyond eligibility. **Listen Here!**

Second, HCCY members are invited to attend the **King County Bar Association Drug Policy Project Children and Families Working Group** hosted by Roger Goodman. Please see below for more details on this luncheon meeting this **Thursday, June 5th** in Seattle, and a PPT with more information is attached. It will be very helpful to have health policy folks interested and participating in this discussion.

If you have an update that you would like to share with the HCCY members, please let me know.

Take care,

Teresa Mosqueda
Health Policy Coordinator, Children's Alliance
2017 E. Spruce St., Seattle, WA 98122
teresa@childrensalliance.org
phone: 206.324.0340 x21

The Children's Alliance celebrates our 25th Anniversary! For details, contact julie@childrensalliance.org

Appendix E – Community Approaches Presentation Info

15th Annual Joint Conference on Health Presentation Information

I.D. #: 84

Title: 3 Community Approaches to Covering All Kids and Linking Them to Health Care

Category: PH - Other

Presenter(s):

Lisa Podell Public Health -Seattle & King County
Wendy Carr Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access
Rhonda Hauff Yakima Neighborhood Health Services

Format: Panel

Time: 90m

Room Set-up: Classroom style

Moderator Chosen: Yes

JCH Providing LCD Projector: ☒

Presenter bringing own LCD: ☐

VCR/Monitor: ☐

Flipchart: ☐

JCH Providing Laptop: ☒

Presenter bringing own Laptop: ☐

Overhead: ☐

Laser Pointer: ☐

Slide Projector: ☐

Other Equipment:

The King County Children's Health Initiative (CHI), Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access (WAHA) and Yakima County Kids Connect offer innovative approaches to working with partners within their communities to provide families with the information and assistance they need to enroll their children in health insurance and connect them to "medical and dental homes." Health education, enrollment assistance and linkage to care is targeted to populations disproportionately uninsured and/or affected by disease, using culturally effective staff and messages. Strategies to be highlighted are WAHA's work with schools, CHI's use of promotoras and a state data match that allows them to follow-up with children who are enrolled but haven't yet seen a doctor or dentist, and Yakima's web-based Case Management system to coordinate referrals and track families' health coverage and connection to medical homes. In 2007, the three programs connected over 2,000 low-income children. Outcomes shared will demonstrate the effectiveness of these targeted approaches to enrollment and linkage in reducing health disparities and improving health equity.

Objectives: No. 1 Participants will know how to use state data to assure children are linked to medical and dental homes.

No. 2 Participants will partner more effectively with schools to enroll and link families to care.

No. 3 Participants will understand options for coordinating referrals and tracking coverage to care.

Reviewer's Comments: *(The number in front of sentences indicate where reviewer comment started).*

(148) This is extremely timely. The work that will be highlighted links local community efforts to the statewide focus priority of the Governor and legislature.

Appendix E – Community Partnerships Presentation Info

15th Annual Joint Conference on Health Presentation Information

I.D. #: 70

Title: Community Partnerships Improving Health Equity: The King County CHI

Category: Health Education/Promotion

Presenter(s):

Susan Johnson *Public Health - Seattle & King County*
Karen Merrikin *Group Health Cooperative*
Laura Smith *Washington Dental Service Foundation*
TBD

Format: Panel

Time: 90m

Room Set-up: Classroom style

Moderator Chosen: Yes

JCH Providing LCD Projector: ☒ Presenter bringing own LCD: ☐ VCR/Monitor: ☐ Flipchart: ☐
JCH Providing Laptop: ☒ Presenter bringing own Laptop: ☐ Overhead: ☐ Laser Pointer: ☐
Slide Projector: ☐ Other Equipment:

The King County Children's Health Initiative, CHI, is designed to surmount the barriers children disproportionately affected by socioeconomic and racial forces face in receiving consistent access to health care services by: assertively locating and enrolling children in public health insurance programs; disseminating messages about the value of early prevention and insurance in many languages utilizing community messengers; linking families and children to a regular source of medical and dental care, and encouraging quality integrated service delivery within clinics by utilizing case managers. This innovative program is supported by a combined \$6m public/private matching funding by nearly 20 contributing entities. Pilot programs in the areas of mental health, oral health and online enrollment are innovative in their linkage with the State's intentions as expressed in the 2007 statute to cover all kids by 2010. Outcomes shared, (eg # of children establishing medical and dental homes, # of preventive services received, system costs avoided) will demonstrate the effectiveness of the program in its approach to reducing health disparities and improving health equity at a community level. In addition, linkages between the King County Children's Health Initiative and the King County Equity and Social Justice Initiative will be explored.

- Objectives:**
- No. 1 Learner will give examples of improved health resulting from health care coverage and linkage to medical and dental homes.
 - No. 2 Learner will demonstrate linkage of community pilot programs to achievement of policy objectives at the state level.
 - No. 3 Learner will articulate the value of utilizing community leaders and messengers in achieving health equity.

Reviewer's Comments: *(The number in front of sentences indicate where reviewer comment started).*

(130) Very specific to King County with little impact to outside communities. (158) Large community partnership, significant issue (children's access to health care), and social justice link.

Appendix E – WithinReach Partnership Award News Release

Public Health receives the WithinReach Partnership Award

Public Health - Seattle & King County is the recipient of the WithinReach Partnership Award. The award is given to an organization for its continuous commitment to WithinReach (formerly Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies) by strengthening community partnerships, providing generous support and enhancing WithinReach's efforts to target diverse populations.

For nearly twenty years, WithinReach and Public Health – Seattle & King County have worked together to protect and improve the health of King County residents. Through programs like the Children's Health Initiative, the Physician Lactation Education Collaborative, and the Family Health Hotline, our collaborations have improved the quality of life, closed persistent gaps in health status and created a healthier future for thousands of families.



(front l-r) Sandra Randels, Lauren Greenfield (back l-r) Betsy Hubbard, Susan Johnson, Kathy Carson, Lisa DiGiorgio. Not pictured: Dr. Nancy Danoff

Appendix E – CHI and KC Kids News Release

Children are winners with more healthcare

More than 1,500 children in King County are getting health care they didn't have access to otherwise, thanks to the County Executive's and County Council's enhanced effort to link uninsured children to medical and dental coverage. Executive Ron Sims, Council President Julia Patterson and former budget chair, Councilmember Larry Gossett, were honored June 2, by a coalition of groups for the county's leadership on children's health.

As a result of the King County Children's Health Initiative, over 2,500 children have received coverage with the state and over 70% of those have been to see a doctor.

"King County now leads the state in helping children not only to get covered by insurance but actually to get through the doors to a medical and a dental home and get the services they need," said Group Health Cooperative Chief Executive Officer Scott Armstrong when presenting the awards. Group Health's \$1 million contribution helped jump start the effort that collected \$3 million from 19 additional funders plus the Washington Dental Service, hospitals and United Way. The County Council matched the donations with a \$3 million commitment from 2007 through 2009.



Group Health CEO Scott Armstrong, Executive Ron Sims, Council Chair Julia Patterson, Councilmember Larry Gossett, and Sue Sharpe, Communities Connect.

In addition to outreach and linkage, pilot programs in the areas of behavioral health, online enrollment and dental access are underway.

The CHI is being implemented through the Health Action Plan and in conjunction with the Outreach and Access team within Public Health. For more information on the Children's Health Initiative and about free dental care through the KC Kids dental program go to www.metrokc.gov/health/kchap/chi.htm or call Susan Johnson at 263-8684.

Appendix E – American City & County Magazine Article

- Print Pages

Page 1 of 7

By Nancy Mann Jackson


Ahead of the curve

County Leader of the Year
Ron Sims finds common ground to solve King County, Wash.'s pressing issues.

AMERICAN CITY & COUNTY

26 July 2008 www.americancityandcounty.com

<http://www.americancityandcounty-digital.com/americanityandcounty/200807/templates/...> 7/10/2008



ong before it was cool to be green, King County, Wash., Executive Ron Sims was interested in environmental issues. In fact, in 1988, as a county councilmember, Sims sponsored legislation to fund an Office of Global Warming. The idea was before its time and the measure did not pass, but Sims did not stop working to mitigate global warming and develop programs to help people adapt to the changing climate. "We're going to have global warming, and people are going to have to live with it," Sims says.

So, he makes it his job to determine how people can live with it more easily. Last year, Sims commissioned scientists at the University of Washington's Climate Impacts Group to project the condition of King County in 2050, the results of which were "very unsettling," he says. Predictions included warmer, wetter winters with

PHOTO BY JED ABRAHAM, KING COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

AMERICAN CITY & COUNTY

July 2008 27



flooding caused by melting snow runoff from the mountains. Immediately, Sims had the local levy system tested and realized it would not withstand the projected levels of rain and flooding.

To prepare the area for the future, Sims proposed abolishing all current flood districts and creating one King County Flood District to rebuild all levies "to a 2050 standard," he says. The combined district would be financed by increased sales taxes, and when it came to a vote, the measure passed with flying colors. "I was shocked," Sims says of the bill's passage.

But, for those who work with Sims, the outcome is just one testament to his unique leadership style. "So much of leadership is creating a better future," says Jim Lopez, Sims' deputy chief of staff. "Ron's leadership style takes us into the future. He takes us there, makes us imagine what it will be, and then designs plans to get us there. Such vision combined with action is a very important combination."

For his leadership in finding solutions to environmental, health and transportation problems to create a better home for residents, King County Executive Ron Sims is American City & County's 2008 County Leader of the Year.

Building a greener future

In addition to reconstructing the county's levy system to adapt to a changing climate, Sims also works to lessen potential environmental damage. With representatives of 12 other counties, Sims helped launch the Cool Coun-

ties Climate Stabilization Initiative last year. The program seeks to marshal the resources of counties across the nation to address the challenges climate change poses. Each participating county pledges to reduce its contributions to climate change through internal operational improvements, demonstrate regional leadership to achieve climate stabilization, help its community become climate resilient and urge the federal government to support the group's efforts. Under Sims' leadership, King County has committed to reduce its emissions rate by 80 percent by 2050.

Based on the county's experience in developing and implementing its own climate action plan, in 2007, Sims co-authored a guidebook for local, regional and state governments on how to prepare for climate change. The book, "Preparing for Climate Change: A Guidebook for Local, Regional and State Governments," is available for free at the county Web site (www.kingcounty.gov/exec/globalwarming) and now is being used by hundreds of governments around the world. "People accept the fact that we will have global warming, and for the most part, they are accepting our vision of how to deal with it," Sims says.

Improving community health

Closely related to Sims' environmental interests are his concerns about residents' health. An estimated 16,000 children in King County have no health insurance, according to a 2004 survey. For Sims, that figure is unacceptable: He wants all children in King County to

King County is building a \$1.8 billion wastewater treatment plant that will be equipped with the world's largest wastewater biomembrane to clean effluent for agricultural, irrigation and industrial use, reducing regional demand for drinking water.

have access to health and dental insurance coverage and preventive services.

In 2006, Sims convened the Children's Health Access Task Force (CHATF) of experts to advise King County on creating a county-based children's health program. When the CHATF recommended the creation of King County's Children's Health Initiative (CHI), a local approach to improving health for low-income children, Sims started finding money for the cause.

By mid-2007, Sims had led the community in raising \$6 million in public/private funding to provide health and dental insurance coverage for all county children. Under his leadership, Seattle-based Group Health Cooperative committed its largest community grant ever, \$1 million per year for three years, to further the CHI goals. That spurred Seattle-based Washington Dental Service to contribute another \$1 million, and then 18 more organizations contributed a total of \$1 million, matching a \$3 million commitment from the King County Council. "It was all because Ron was out there talking to people, explaining the importance of this program," says Rachel Quinn, health policy liaison for King County.

With \$6 million in funding commitments for three years, the CHI has begun driving down the numbers of uninsured children in King County.

Program employees are locating and enrolling children in public health insurance programs, spreading messages in many languages about the value of early prevention and insurance, linking families and children to regular sources of medical and dental care, and encouraging integrated services within clinics. Since early 2007, more than 2,500 children have received health coverage, and more than 70 percent of those have been to a doctor. In addition, more than 6,300 low-income parents have learned about insurance and preventive medical and dental care. "It was all because of Ron going out and talking to leaders in the community," Quinn says. "He just made it happen. We started doing outreach in July 2007, and since then, we've

cal procedures are treating diseases as research says they should. "It took three years to get the report done, and a lot of people were getting antsy because they just want their costs to go down," Quinn says. "But Ron kept everyone on board, focused on the goal."

Last year, PSHA piloted a community-wide reporting program that applied the standards to rank doctors across five counties. The PSHA now reports in detail on every practice with six or more doctors, and the information is available to employers, insurers and consumers. "It helps encourage providers to implement their own improvements, and it helps consumers to see who's really treating a particular disease most successfully," Quinn says.



Last year, Sims organized the Puget Sound Regional Green Fleet Initiative for local governments to develop a uniform green fleet standard and promote best practices in fleet design and operation.

outpaced our projections of enrolling children and getting them seen by a physician." The CHI also has spurred the state government to reach farther politically than it has in the past, by setting policy goals for statewide coverage of children by 2010.

In another initiative, Sims created the Puget Sound Health Alliance (PSHA), a non-profit organization comprised of health professionals, businesses and governments, to ensure that all residents are receiving the proper standard of health care. The group spent three years studying and defining treatment and care standards for a number of medical conditions, creating the first regional comparison report of its kind in the United States. The group collected data from employers and health care providers and used nationally approved measures to determine whether medi-

"The PSHA was created with the idea that if [we] put everyone in the same room, we could come together on strategies to improve health," Sims adds. "And now, it's fundamentally changing health care."

Steering growth

King County's residents heavily rely on automobiles, and increasing air pollution from those vehicles can affect residents' health, environment and quality of life, Sims says. In addition, a growing population and aging infrastructure demand new ideas. "Rather than building new freeways, Ron started looking at new solutions," says Carolyn Duncan, Sims' communications director. "That's his signature."

In early 2007, King County joined the Washington State Department of Transportation and the Puget Sound

Regional Council to secure a \$127 million Urban Partnership Grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The group's winning transportation strategy centers on Sims' suggestion of variable tolling, a market-driven approach to reducing congestion (tolls are higher during peak travel hours and lower when fewer vehicles are on the road). With the funds from the tolls, the state will help pay to replace a vulnerable, 40-year-old bridge across Lake Washington that connects Seattle and its growing suburban communities. The plan also specifies adding 45 buses to the suburban corridor, providing up to 1 million new bus passenger trips each year.

Early in 2007, Sims led the rollout of King County's Transit Now initiative to expand Metro Transit service, which was approved by voters in the November 2006 general election. Funded by a one-tenth cent sales tax, the measure will help Metro expand service by 15 to 20 percent over the next 10 years. Longer-range improvements will include creating bus rapid transit service in five busy corridors, more bus service on high-usage routes and in growing residential areas, and improvements to the transportation system's Rideshare and paratransit options. To support the increased service, the county is adding new buses to its fleet and replacing aging buses. Many of the new buses are hybrid diesel-electric coaches, which fit into the Regional Green Fleet Initiative that Sims organized with other neighboring governments in 2007.

With his transportation plans, Sims "has integrated pollution control with livable communities, which creates healthier people, which helps on health care reform," Duncan says. "It really all fits together, and he has this integrated approach: All these initiatives used to operate in silos, but now we have cross-discipline teams working on solutions with a holistic approach."

That holistic, big-picture approach is the genius of Sims' leadership style. But, while the ideas may start with Sims, he is quick to share the credit for what has been accomplished on his watch. "I'm most proud of my innovative, talented staff," he says. "I believe you have to manage incompetence, but you can just enjoy intelligence that is calibrated enough to succeed."

— Nancy Mann Jackson is a Florence, Ala.-based freelance writer.